

NBC NIGHTLY NEWS  
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NPO2|SPACE SHUTTLE|BROKAW: A big part of this story is the role of the  
|2|press. Defense Secretary Weinberger and Air Force officials have been saying that to publish or broadcast details of the launch would jeopardize national security. Today's Washington Post story on the launch described the kind of satellite that would be sent up and its general mission. As Robert Hager reports tonight, that touched off a spirited, sometimes angry debate on the role of the press.

HAGER: The Pentagon is investigating leaks from Cape Canaveral. NBC had the story three weeks ago and the Associated Press a few days later. But after Defense Secretary Weinberger telephoned saying the story would seriously endanger national security, both organizations agreed to withhold it. NBC's news president, Larry Grossman: LARRY GROSSMAN: No, I don't see how we could have responded in any other way than the way we did. It's a very tough call, because, obviously, it's a moment when the right of the people to know and the importance of having an informed democracy clashes with the national security.

HAGER: Associated Press Vice President Walter Mears: WALTER MEARS: You got two valid concerns, weighed the one against the other and decided in this case it was appropriate not to move the story.

HAGER: Aviation Week and Space Technology also had the story and decided on its own that it was too sensitive to print. But the Washington Post decided to print what it said were parts of the story this morning. Editor Benjamin Bradley said the paper 'kept out information the Pentagon considered sensitive.' 'Virtually every fact mentioned is a matter of public record.' Retired Admiral Gene \*LaRock, a Pentagon critic, agreed.

ADM. GENE \*LaRock (retired): So I don't think there's anything in the newspapers today that the Soviets did not know today or will not know in a short time anyway.

HAGER: But Sen. Patrick Leahy, who's on the Intelligence Committee, says that's not true. SEN. PATRICK LEAHY (D-Vt.): If this article is accurate, then it's extraordinarily damaging to the United States to be on the front page, and it should not be there.

HAGER: Secretary Weinberger feels the same way.

SECRETARY CASPAR WEINBERGER: ...What's being done when this is published is, is behaving very irresponsibly and is actually causing damage or at least potential damage, and I think, in this case, actual damage to the nation's

security. And I don't think there's any, any right to know or anything of that kind. You're really talking about the right of the Soviets to know.

HAGER: Now, what the Pentagon is investigating is not why the story's been published, but who leaked it. Robert Hager, NBC News, Washington.